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ABSTRACT

In an effort to alleviate salary inequities in the state university system, the Florida legislature required the nine universities to examine all faculty and administrative salaries and make all warranted adjustments. This comprehensive and systematic effort provides the basis for a survey of women faculty attitudes toward affirmative action efforts. A mailed questionnaire and telephone interviews were used; this report summarizes telephone responses. It is shown that despite the state's efforts, many women still do not believe they are treated fairly. Some feel that any progress made is eliminated by inequitable distribution of merit increases. Most received no active encouragement to take advantage of a legal right to apply for salary adjustment, and some were discouraged. Relationships with colleagues were disturbed. However, most women did take the opportunity to seek redress, most applicants did receive pay increases, and they do not appear to have been penalized for their effort. There were few complaints of harrassment or backlash. The tabulated responses are appended. (MSE)

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Attitudes of Women Faculty Toward Sex Equity Efforts in the State University System of Florida

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The employment status of women in academe has been the subject of numerous studies during the past decade. Massive documentation attests to the fact that, among other things, women earn less than men with comparable experience and training (e.g., Centra, 1974; ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, 1971; Ferber and Loeb, 1973; Kimmel, 1973). Methods to determine the amount of discrimination in salary due to sex have been developed and remedies accordingly implemented in various universities and other systems (Pendergrass, 1980).

Perhaps the most notable effort to alleviate salary inequities has occurred in Florida where the State Legislature passed a law requiring the nine universities in its State University System (SUS) to examine the salaries of all faculty and administrative personnel and make whatever adjustments were warranted. The first state-wide study and adjustments for inequities due to sex discrimination were completed at the beginning of academic year 1976-77; the process is repeated annually.

Esentially, two methods were employed to determine the existence of sex discrimination. The first, and most widespread, was the "counterpart method" developed by Kimmel (1973) at one of the SUS campuses in 1972. In the counterpart method, each individual, usually working with her department head, compared

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her record of training, experience and accomplishments in teaching, research and service with the records of male colleagues who were judged to be most similar to her. Having found the "best fit" (sometimes using one record, sometimes with a conglomerate of records which, averaged, came closest to her achievements and experience), salaries were compared to ascertain whether or not her salary was commensurate. If yes, no adjustment was recommended. If her salary was lower, it was to be adjusted to the level of the counterpart(s)'. Disagreements between the department head or other administrator as to appropriate choice of counterpart(s) or amount of salary adjustment were appealed through local mechanisms. These appeal processes varied from campus to campus, as did the exact methods of contacting women faculty and working with them to review salaries. It should be noted that male faculty were allowed to participate in the 1976-77 study using the same procedures. In fact, on one campus men received over $115,000 in salary adjustments.

A second possibility for identifying and correcting salary inequities offered to each university was a regression analysis to compare men and women faculty on the basis of discipline, degrees earned and years of experience (Nevill, 1975). This method can be crudely effective to determine salary difference due to sex when large numbers of faculty are available, but is practically useless in looking at a single woman in a small department. Some institutions used the statistical method to identify instances of possible discrimination and then invited these women to apply for an adjustment using the counterpart method for "finer" detection.

Because the Florida salary surveys and corrections efforts are the most systematic and comprehensive to date, they provide an ideal background against which to assess possible attitudinal effects of a specific affirmative action effort on the affected employees and their male colleagues. Rarely can one specify the independent variables in "naturalistic" studies so clearly as in the Florida case. We as researchers hoped to capitalize on a rather unique set of historical circumstances (i.e., the Legislature's actions and the responses of the Board of Regents and the member universities). Further, as faculty members of two of the SUS institutions, we had access to affected personnel to solicit their reactions.

The study reported here is part of a combination mailed questionnaire and telephone interview survey of faculty members in the State University System of Florida. Analysis of the questionnaire data is not yet complete, but will be available shortly. This report summarizes information gathered in telephone interviews with women faculty at two of the state universities. The purposes of the interviews were to solicit perceptions of faculty women regarding the effectiveness of the sex equity efforts, to describe experiences of women who applied for adjustment, and to attempt to identify factors important in success in achieving sex equity.

Method

Subjects. For the questionnaire mail-out, 100 male and female faculty members listed in 1975-6 and 1977-8 university catalogues were selected systematically using a random starting point.

From among those not selected in this original sample, 30 names of women faculty were selected from catalogues of each of two campuses for the intensive telephone interviews. Selection was systematic, using a random starting point.

Of the 60 individuals originally selected, ten on each campus had to be discarded. Reasons for drop-out included: one person turned out to be male; one refused; one gave "don't know" responses to all opinion items; others were unavailable because of overseas sabbaticals or could not be located.

Procedure. The study was reviewed and approved for implementation by the universities' human risk committees, but it was not sponsored in any way by the universities or SUS. This was made clear to all Ss in an introductory letter explaining the study. Confidentiality was assured.

Each telephone interview lasted about 20-30 minutes, and consisted of both open-ended and closed items. Open-ended responses were categorized into pre-established categories during the interview. If the interviewer was unsure of categorization, or the response did not fit available categories, it was transcribed verbatim for later categorization. The three interviewers demonstrated excellent agreement in categorization of responses during role-played interviews conduct by the authors over the telephone, simulating actual interview conditions.

Questions were designed to elicit demographic information, and respondents' opinions on the effects of the sex equity studies on backlash, morale of men and women faculty, sex equity in the university system and creation of "reverse discrimination", and other possible effects. Subjects were also asked about their

own personal experiences in applying for salary adjustments, if they had participated in one of the studies. Results are reported based upon varying n's because all Ss did not respond to all items.

Results and Discussion

Description of Respondents. Average age of the 40 women interviewed was 42.9 years. They were distributed in rank as follows: 15% instructors, 42.5% assistant professors, 37.5% associates and 5% full professors. In view of the fact that 27% of the respondents were 50 years or older and might be expected to be at the peak of their careers, the percentage of full professors is interesting.

There were no engineers or mathematicians in the sample; all other disciplines were represented, with the majority being in social sciences, humanities and performing or fine arts. Forty-five percent were members of the faculty union, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO.

Of the 40 respondents, 33 applied for an adjustment at some time, 5 did not apply and 2 did not respond to the item.

Factors Affecting Application. One area of interest in the interview was conditions which might have favored or disfavored application for a salary adjustment by a woman. Obviously, since 33 out of 40 applied, nothing effectively inhibited applications. One factor considered, however, was whether the woman was encouraged or discouraged by others. Respondents were divided into those who were identified as potentially underpaid and were invited to apply, those who were informally encouraged by friends, colleagues or others, those informally discouraged and those who

reported receiving no feedback on the matter. Of those invited to apply, 6 a pplied and one did not respond to the item. Nine women reported encouragement from others, of whom 7 applied. All seven women who reported being discouraged by others applied. Seventeen reported no reactions from others; of these, 13 applied and one did not respond to the item.

The most frequently reported source of discouragement was supervisors with whom the applicant had frequent contact (chairperson or dean). These supervisors were also mentioned as sources of encouragement, although friends and family were cited most frequently as encouraging. Negative reactions of others, therefore, were not frequent and did not have an intimidating character, even when the discouraging person was significant to the person's employment status. Although on another item three applicants indicated that "fear of repercussions" was the major consideration in deciding whether or not to apply, all three applied.

In other responses to the item asking what was the most important consideration for them in deciding whether or not to apply for a salary increase, 65% of the 37 respondents said the major consideration was whether they perceived inequity in pay in their own situation. Three women who examined salaries of counterparts to determine whether or not such inequities existed decided not to apply because no inequity existed. Additional considerations offered by small numbers of respondents were the chance to get more money, and the time and effort required by the application process.

Factors Affecting Success of Application. Women who applied for salary adjustments might have received more than they requested, the same as they requested, an amount less than they requested, or their application may have been denied entirely and no adjustment offered. Factors which were investigated as potentially affecting success of the application (other than objective evidence of discrimination) were whether or not the woman received advice and support from some organized group (either applicants or the union), whether the woman received support of administrators (i.e., those invited to apply or encouraged by supervisors), and how "realistic" the selection of a counterpart was.

Overall, one of the 33 applicants received more than requested; 42% received the same as requested; 42% received less than requested, and 12% received no adjustment.

Table I shows the outcomes broken down into categories of encouragement or discouragement to apply. Goodman and Kruskal's lambda for this data showed that prediction of success could be improved 27% by knowledge of encouragement or discouragement. Certainly those discouraged, some by administrators, fared no worse than other candidates. Only one woman who was discouraged received no adjustment. This may indicate that the perceptions of immediate colleagues are somewhat biased about existence of sex discrimination, or it may simply mean that insistent applicants get bought off. Those who did not have any feedback from others fared worst; this may mean that these women were less informed or less committed to following through or both.

Whether or not the women participated in support activities

(union or peer) appeared to have little effect on success of the applicant, as shown in Tables II and III. Women were apparently neither helped in gaining better settlements nor penalized for organized activity. The lack of penalty is important because 11 of the 12 women who participated in peer support groups felt the groups had a positive effect, usually in developing relationships between women professionals or providing peer support.

In the counterparting process, women were encouraged to review credentials of potential counterparts and in consultation with the chairperson or dean agree upon a suitable person. There were numerous variations on this theme. Some women selected a counterpart independently; some were not able to reach agreement with the supervisor and either persisted in their original choices or capitulated. At least one woman was assigned a counterpart in absentia.

Overall, 46% of the applicants felt that the counterpart accepted was actually less qualified than they. One factor which may be important here is the possible underranking of women in the university system. If women are discriminated in rank as well as pay, colleagues within rank will tend to be less qualified. Women were not required to select within rank, but the assumption was made by some that this was required.

Only 21% of the 19 candidates who selected a counterpart independently, however, felt that their counterparts were actually less qualified. This may be the phenomenon of commitment when one has sole responsibility for a decision, but it may also reflect the tendency of supervisors to recommend less qualified candidates.

If the supervisors were, however, injecting a note of realism into counterpart choices, then candidates who selected independently should have received less than requested because their requests were inflated. Table IV shows the success of

applications broken down by method of selection of counterpart. There appeared to be no relationship between method of selection of counterpart and success of application.

Impact of the Studies. Official university records at the conclusion of each sex equity study show that there are no differentials in pay on the basis of sex in the university. One of the major purposes of this study, however, was to investigate faculty perceptions of the success of the sex equity efforts to eliminate discrimination.

Respondents were asked to indicate positive effects, if any, of the studies in both open-ended and ranking items. In response to the open-ended item, 36% of the 39 respondents indicated that the sex equity studies had produced no positive effects. In contrast, 30.8% felt that the economic status of women in the university system had been improved. Fifteen percent felt that participation had increased understanding of pay scales and sexism; this was confirmed by responses to the question "When did you become aware of inequities in pay based on sex?" Forty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they became aware of sexism in pay during the sex equity studies.

Respondents were also asked to rank the effectiveness of the studies overall in eliminating sex inequities from 1= extremely effective to 5= not effective at all. A second ranking item asked respondents to indicate the effect of the studies on morale of women employees from 1= greatly damaged to 5= greatly improved. A third item asked for perceptions of creation of "reverse discrimination", i.e., women paid more than male counterparts (1= great extent to 5= no "reverse discrimination" created).

Percentages of respondents giving positive and negative views, and average ranks, are shown in Table V. In general, the ranking supports the open-ended statements; women feel that the sex equity studies have to some extent remediated sex inequities in pay. Few felt that any appreciable "reverse discrimination" existed.

When asked about possible negative effects of the studies, 26% of the 39 respondents felt that the studies had had no negative effects. Thirty-six percent mentioned that the studies had produced tension between colleagues and/or embarrassed those chosen as counterparts. Twenty-three percent felt that the process of applying for equity was humiliating. In ranking items, respondents were asked to evaluate backlash (1= great backlash to 5= sex equity efforts enhanced), morale of men (1= damaged greatly to 5= improved greatly) and impact of adjustments on distribution of merit money to applicants (1= greatly reduced to 5= greatly increased awards). Percentages of positive and negative views, and average ranks, are shown in Table VI. There was little perception of backlash, but respondents felt morale of men was damaged slightly. They also felt that merit awards were somewhat reduced; new inequities created by such awards, however, can be remediated in the next year's sex equity study.

Overall, the opinions of the impact of the study are mild, whether positive or negative. Obviously most women do not feel that inequities in pay on the basis of sex have been permanently eliminated, but on the other hand, many feel that the economic situation of women in the university has been somewhat improved

and the personal cost has been minor.

Summary

One can take either a pessimistic or optimistic view of these findings. On the one hand, the State of Florida has expended several hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to achieve equity in pay on the basis of sex, but many women still do not believe that they are treated fairly. Some feel that any progress made is eliminated by inequitable distribution of merit increases. Most received no active encouragement to take advantage of a legal right to apply for salary adjustments, and some were discouraged. Relations with colleagues were disturbed.

Alternately, a revolutionary attempt to eliminate sexism in university pay policies in Florida produced fairly minor discomfort for both men and women. Most women took advantage of the opportunity to seek redress. Most applicants did receive increases in pay, and do not appear to have been penalized for their efforts. The lack of complaints of harrassment or backlash is comforting. All of this should be good news to other administrators contemplating taking similar affirmative action to eliminate sexism in employment, either by judicial decree or for humanitarian re asons.

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TABLE I Outcome of Application for those who were

Amount Awarded in Relation to Request	Invited to Apply #	Encouraged #	Discouraged #	Given no Feedback #
More	0	0	0	1
Same	2	6	5	3
Less	4	0	1	6
None	0	2	1	3

n= 34

λ = .27

TABLE II Outcome of Application in Relation to Participation in a Peer Support Group (n= 33)

Amount Awarded in Relation to Request	Participated #	Did Not Participate #
More	0	1
Same	6	8
Less	4	10
	1	3

λ = .11

TABLE III Outcome of Application in Relation to Membership in Faculty Union (n= 33)

Amount Awarded in Relation to Request	Member #	Non-Member #
More	0	1
Same	6	8
Less	6	8
None	2	2

$\lambda = 0.0$

TABLE IV Outcome of Application in Relation to Mode of Selection of Counterpart (n= 30)

Amount Awarded in Relation to Request	Independent Selection #	Consultation #	Other #
More	0	0	0
Same	10	3	3
Less	8	2	4

$\lambda = .06$

TABLE V Perceptions of Potential Positive Effects of Salary Equity Studies

Item	n	Outcomes in Percent Endorsing		Mean Rank
1. Overall Effectiveness	36	Effective Ineffective	72.2% 27.8%	3.16
2. Morale of Women	39	Improved No Effect Damaged	61.5% 17.9% 20.5%	3.46
3. "Reverse Discrimination"	37	Some None	32.4% 67.6%	4.59

TABLE VI Perceptions of Potential Negative Effects of Salary Equity Studies

Item	n	Outcomes in Percent Endorsing		Mean Rank
1. Morale of Men	37	Damaged No Effect Improved	59.4% 29.7% 10.8%	2.49
2. Backlash	36	Enhanced No Effect Decreased	33.3% 25.0% 41.7%	3.08
3. Distribution of Merit Awards	35	Reduced No Effect Enhanced	51.4% 37.1% 11.4%	2.49